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FASHIONS OF THE 1830 PERIOD

Fashion Art of Today and Yesterday

By EVELYN MARIE STUART

OF all the arts, real or so-called, that of dress has no doubt been most widely discussed as it is most generally attempted, yet, both from the standpoint of theory and practice, it still remains, like love, perpetually fresh and fascinating. Fashions of the day lure with the charm of novelty and those of yesterday with the sweetness of romance. In every time and country it has been the usual habit of those who wrote upon the subject to bitterly condemn whatever happened to be the mode and praise without stint costumes which were worn in "the good old times." A careful study of history, however, fails to fix the exact date of these "good old times" since, though the investigator begin with the present and go back to the dawn of

written history, he will find nothing in any age but criticism of the present styles.

It is difficult to determine what does or does not constitute art in dress, and by far more difficult to explain and set forth the whys and wherefores. Thus it is that most critics flounder hopelessly and end by denouncing whatever is new or unfamiliar and by advocating in a broad and general manner the adoption of "simple, natural modes." As a matter of fact no mode of dressing is natural. Dress even in its simplest form is a purely artificial matter and is therefore governed only by the principles of decorative art. A costume which reveals every line of the figure, one which conceals them all, or one which imparts new or modified outlines, creating often a



FANCY DRESS COSTUMES IN LOUIS XV EFFECTS

silhouette in many respects quite dissimilar to that of the human figure, each and all of these may be equally pleasing, graceful and artistic.

This, however, is not a matter of accident or caprice, but of law and of principles such as govern every other branch of constructive art. Proportion plays a large part in the success or failure of a costume design. Thus we find the Louis XVI costume with its highly artificial hoop skirt and equally artificial high head dress, harmonious and picturesque because the one balances the proportion of the other. The 1860 costume on the other hand, combining a full crinoline with a plain head dress, even in the best examples, proves only quaint and never once artistic, because it has overlooked the necessity for properly balanced proportions. The Empire costume is entirely artistic, revealing the figure as in classic draperies. We see it in its perfection in our illustration of Madame J. Regnault De Saint Jean D'Augely, and again in the bridal picture of Madame Junot.

The two small fashion prints of the period of approximately 1815 show how dangerous it is to attempt a conglomerate style. Here we have the upper part of the costume still revealing the classic inspiration of the Empire modes, while the skirt widens toward the crinoline. Even though the pictures are pleasing by reason of their quaint old fashioned suggestion the lack of harmony in their lines is at once apparent to the most casual observer.

The 1830 costume frankly swinging again to the crinoline and revealing a waist line well defined restores the old bell shaped silhouette and achieves a certain grace and piquancy, while the high poke bonnet balances the composition agreeably. There have been times in history when human habiliments seem sadly out of joint. Such times were the Elizabethan when exaggeration involving discomfort disturbed the grace and dignity of human movements. The 1860 period when flat hair dressing was combined inharmoniously with elaborate and full skirts, the period of the tight-



DOLLY MADISON IN THE COSTUME
OF THE EARLY EIGHTEENS



AN ENGLISH ADAPTATION
OF LOUIS XVI MODES



MADAME REGNAULT DE SAINT JEAN
D'ANGELY—A PERFECT TYPE
OF EMPIRE MODES



MADAME DE STAEL IN EMPIRE
COSTUME WITH ORIENTAL TURBAN

ly laced waist and large bustle and the period when we mistakenly attempted tailor-made costumes with corset lines. Outside of these, fashions have very generally proven artistic and beautiful and even during the reign of the least favorable modes, such as we have here mentioned, women of the best taste contrived to achieve pleasing effects and to wear these well nigh impossible garments with grace and distinction.

Of all the forms of dress, fashions which completely reveal the figure, as did those of the Empire, and those which completely drape or conceal it, as did some of the robes of the Gothic and Middle ages, are perhaps simplest to handle. When it comes to imparting a new silhouette or varying the human outline the problem becomes more difficult to solve, calling, as it does, for the exercise of the keenest artistic instinct and the most discriminating taste. One of the commendable features of fashion for the



MADAME JUNOT—NAPOLEON'S
BIOGRAPHER IN HER BRIDAL GOWN



EMILY C. JUDSON, EARLY AMERICAN
JOURNALIST, ANOTHER EXPONENT OF THE
SIMPLE MODES OF THE MIDDLE EIGHTEENS

past few seasons has been the attention given by designers to the silhouette, showing an attempt to approach the matter from a scientific and artistic standpoint. A costume, like a picture, involves composition and color harmony as a basis of its success.

In ages past fashions grew and developed much more cautiously than they do today, for the reason that processes of manufacture were slower and that the dissemination of news from point to point was a matter of months rather than of moments. For this reason people tired of fashions less suddenly and a mode which prevailed through several years had an opportunity to become refined through adaptation and selection, to a point of artistic perfection. Modern methods of transporting men and merchandise and present day fashion publications make possible the appearance of the style all over the country, at almost the same time. The development of the garment industry has tended to facilitate this style distribution, so



HARRIET MARTINEAU, EARLY ENGLISH JOURNALIST, IN THE FASHIONS OF THE 1840'S

that a mode soon attains a popularity so widespread as to render it tiresome.

Changes in fashion today are sweeping and sudden for the reasons above outlined and the desire and necessity for new fashions is, in a measure, inclined to work against really sound and artistic design. The prevalence which a style soon obtains has had a tendency to make the real woman of fashion demand individuality in her dress and seek for costumes especially designed to enhance her peculiar charms. She unwittingly perhaps, at least unintentionally, sets the style which others attempt to follow. It is a game with the woman of wealth continually seeking to look different from those less favored by fortune, and those less favored continually seeking to approach her standard, as nearly as possible, and put a distance between themselves and the class just below. The result is that we all end where we began, by looking very much alike and the effort is a strain upon all of us.

In olden days fashions originated at court. Today it is the whim of the great society or theatrical favorites together with the decisions of manufacturers of textiles and garments which decide what will be worn from Maine to California. Every season, however, offers, within the limits of certain well marked style tendencies, a variety of modes, some of which have inherent qualities of grace and smartness which the others lack. The faculty of choosing the best designs of the season's offerings is often the factor which decides whether or not a woman will achieve the subtle distinction of style.

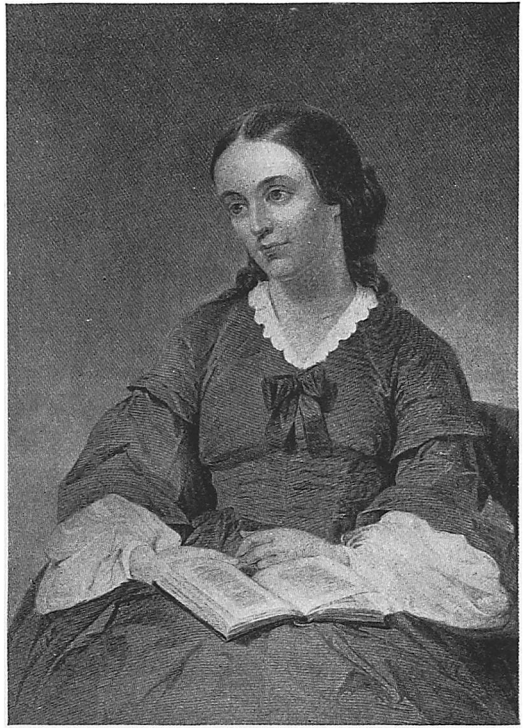
In every day and age a certain few of all the female population have been noted for the grace of their attire. No fashion of dressing was ever so ugly but some women, or some few women, could carry it off with charm. These are the artists born with an innate sense of proportion and of harmony in color and line. As a rule too, such women



MARIE ANTOINETTE TOWARD THE CLOSE OF HER REIGN

possess considerable individuality in modifying the modes to suit their own requirements and in adding little touches of ornament which express their own taste and personality.

The occupations of women have changed and their activities widened so much in the past few decades that styles themselves have undergone complete changes resulting in conditions of which our great grandmothers could not have dreamed. No longer do ladies go about, at least in American cities, in conspicuously gay colors or elaborate fabrics. Dark tones and simple materials have come to be accepted for street wear without a thought of the old days when rich brocades in dazzling hues and mantles of velvet and cloth of gold proclaimed the lady in public. With unerring taste we have relegated the gorgeous to the world of evening and of artificial light. Almost without exception femininity walks abroad in the day time clad in garments of quiet hue and unpretentious fabrics and



SARAH MARGARET FULLER, MOST NOTED OF EARLY AMERICAN LITERARY WOMEN, IN A COSTUME ILLY ADAPTED TO HER TYPE



CHARLOTTE CORDAY SHOWING THE MODES OF THE REVOLUTION

the lady is proclaimed in the expert workmanship represented in the weaving, designing and cutting of her clothes. Now and again some young person steps out of the world of romance into the busy street in gay satins, invariably cheap, only to create a smile half of tolerance and half of pity for her youth and ignorance.

We have approached more nearly perhaps to democracy in dress than in any other line, for it is difficult to distinguish or determine by her street attire the class of society to which any tastefully dressed woman belongs. On account of the breadth and freedom of life in this great Republic it has always been necessary to modify Parisian styles, designed for countries where lines are more closely drawn, to meet our national requirements. Indeed while Paris has been the undisputed mistress of fashion for centuries the United States has been, almost without knowing it, achieving pre-eminence in certain styles of dress best

suiting to our country-women. It has always been remarked that our tailored suits and street clothing were superior in neatness of line and suitability to purpose to anything offered by the more aesthetic French designers.

America has for many decades past been evolving a certain neat, clean cut, practical style of dressing which answers the purposes of its women for all around occasions better than the more fussy and frivolous modes of *le belle France*. We have been adapting Parisian styles, even for after-



ABIGAIL ADAMS SHOWING THE EARLY AMERICAN COSTUME FOR ELDERLY WOMEN

noon, evening and other elaborate occasions, so long that it is a matter of form rather than of fact to begin to talk about American fashions for the American woman as a new idea. The war has only served to bring to notice and to a climax a trend of events which have been steadily working toward this end. Simultaneous with the development of American art has come the development of American art in dress and the interest which we feel in the approaching great fashion shows is as nat-



A DUTCH ADAPTATION OF ELIZABETHAN MODES

ural and commendable as our interest in exhibitions of native sculpture and painting. It is as appropriate, too, that prizes should be offered for the best costumes as for the most worthy works of fine art.



HANNAH MORE, THE ENGLISH AUTHORESS